The Prisons Open'd.

A

POEM

Occasion'd by the late

Glorious Proceedings

OF THE

COMMITTEE

Appointed to enquire into the State of the GOALS of this KINGDOM.

——Facilis descensus Averni;
Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis:
Sed revocare gradum, superasque evadere ad auras,
Hoc opus, hic labor est. Pauci quos æquus amavit
Jupiter, aut ardens evexit ad æthera virtus,
Diis geniti, potuêre. Virg.

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TO

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Tho. Towers, *Esq*;

Sir ABRAHAM ELTON, *Bar.*

And the rest of the

Acting MEMBERS of the COMMITTEE,

The following POEM

Is with the utmost Respect inscrib'd by

The AUTHOR.

THE

PRISONS OPEN'D, &c.

LET Arms and Warriors other Poets fire,
Or Love's ſweet Anguiſh tune the ſofter Lyre;
I ſing of Pris'ners freed and Guilt purſu'd
With gen'rous Ardour by the Great and Good.

O thou from whom that gen'rous Ardour came,
A Heat far nobler than Poetic Flame,
Father of Goodneſs hear, and teach my Lays
That beſt that darling Attribute to Praiſe:
Make liſt'ning Crowds deteſt tyrannick Wrong,
And learn the Love of Mercy from my Song:
Make Patriot's Fame with faireſt Luſtre ſhine,
And raiſe their Glory, by exalting thine.

What various Paths unhappy Mortals tread,
Which down to Dungeons and to Tortures lead!
In Goal a few ſecure their ill-got Store,
By Vices many fall, by Folly more.
The flatter'd Heir in ſhort-liv'd Pomp behold
How fluſh'd with Youth, and Wine, and Love,
and Gold!
All Arts all Baits unnumber'd Tempters try,
Friendſhip's endearing Form, and Beauty's Eye.

Manors

Manors are loſt, tho' petty Stakes are won,
And garter'd Sharpers urge his Ruin on.
By Pity ſome, a glorious Fault, have fail'd,
A Friend ſupported, or a Father bail'd:
Some periſh void of Error and Offence,
Caſt headlong by reſiſtleſs Providence:
Orphans who Frauds of Guardians cannot ſhun,
Clients by legal Labyrinths undone:
The Trader ſtrictly juſt, yet overthrown
By others Crimes, and Loſſes not his own.
Nor more Redreſs the breaking Merchant finds
From *Spaniſh* Seiſures than from adverſe Winds.
Lo! countleſs Swarms the dire Abode receives,
Thick as in Autumn drop the ſapleſs Leaves,
Whom State Deceit and *South-Sea* Plunder drain'd,
Which like a gen'ral Deluge ſwept the Land:

Whom publick Faith could no Protection lend,
Seeming, and only ſeeming to defend.

When Wretches ſtripp'd of Fortune's Gifts repair
To the dark Dome of temporal Deſpair;
Faſt by the Priſon Gates with ſleepleſs Eyes
Sits griping never-ſated Avarice.
To him th'admitted fine for being poor,
And ope with Gold th'inhoſpitable Door.
Compell'd, ſince Laws and Goalers ſo ordain,
To pay for Mis'ry, and to bribe for Pain.
To gain th'*Aſylum* of the *Fleet* they ſtrive,
The Privilege to be entomb'd alive.
So, as the Pagan fabling Poets tell,
Was *Charon* fee'd for wafting Souls to Hell.
To paſs the Lake thick-thronging Ghoſts deſire,
To Torments moſt condemn'd, and penal Fire.

As if *Alecto*'s Snakes they long'd to feel,
Or *Tityus*' Vulture, or *Ixion*'s Wheel.

The Goal, (ſad Emblem of flagitious Times,
Revenging Virtues, and rewarding Crimes,)
Sees only Villains thrive, by Ruin great,
Who owe to Guilt the Splendour of their State:
Who plac'd by Fraud and Wealth from Juſtice free
In Eaſe or Pomp, enjoy Captivity.
Who ſure Eſcape by maſſy Gold can force,
While Wardens ſhare the Wealth of Creditors.
Or thoſe who baſely join t'afflict the Good,
Comrades of Theft, and Inſtruments of Blood.
Whoſe well-feign'd Worth the Merchant's Truſt deceives,
And ſtocks with monthly Spoils the Den of Thieves:

Who

Who as Superiors dictate Witneſs bear,
To Riot Murther nay to Treaſon ſwear;
Who aid to worſt Barbarities afford,
Relentleſs Hell-hounds worthy of their Lord;
Who Drink to burning Fever's Thirſt deny,
And ſee the famiſh'd ſwoon with ſtony Eye;
Permit not Pris'ners e'en on Alms to feed,
But ſnatch from ſtarving Mouths the ſcanty
Bread.
Theſe, theſe alone, from *H----s* met regard,
And theſe the Favours of a *B-----ge* ſhar'd.
While Wrath avoidleſs fell on all beſide,
With utmoſt Fury of deſpotick Pride.
So fam'd *Procruſtes* old, (if Bards may dare
A leſs with greater Tyrants to compare,)
Offers his formidable Bed to all,
And racks the dwarfiſh Gueſt, and lops the
tall.

Thoſe

Thoſe only from the Couch unhurt ariſe,
Whoſe Stature anſwers to the Robber's Size.

The *Fleet*'s ſtern King circled with Guards like theſe,
Each helpleſs Subject robs, and ſtrips, and fleas.
Incarnate Fiends for tort'ring Shackles call,
Except the Captive yields them more than all.
In Priſon within Priſon ſtak'd he lies.
And Keepers under Keepers tyrannize.
With weighty Fetters gaul'd the Suff'rers groan,
Or cloſe ſcru'd Rivets crack the ſolid Bone.
Their only Bed dank Earth unpav'd and bare,
Their only Cov'ring is the Chains they wear.
Debarr'd from chearful Morn, and humane Sight,
In lonely reſtleſs and enduring Night.

The ſtrongeſt Health unſinew'd by Diſeaſe,
And Famine waſting Life by ſlow Degrees.
Piece-meal alive they rot, long doom'd to bear
The peſtilential foul impriſon'd Air:
Unleſs the friendly Fumes on Reaſon prey,
And kind Diſtraction take their Senſe away.
But each black View of horrible Reſtraint,
What Verſe can number, and what Pencil paint?
Dire Scenes! which *H-----s* and his *B-----ge* know,
Where ghaſtly Spectres utter Tales of Woe!
As if the Pris'ners were condemn'd to dwell
With Pains with Darkneſs and with Fiends of Hell.
No ſmalleſt Glimpſe of diſtant Hope they ſee,
O! loweſt Depth of humane Miſery!

When wiſh'd-for Death's Approach ſhews Quiet
nigh,
The Soul juſt flutt'ring is forbid to fly.
Then ſeeming kind, the curſt Tormentors
ſtrive
To keep departing Anguiſh ſtill alive.
So when the long-rob'd Murtherers of *Rome*,
Inquiſitors a Wretch to Tortures doom:
They heal the Limbs which can no more endure,
Leſs cruel when they rack, than when they cure;
That Nature ſpent Recruits of Strength may
gain,
For freſh Diſtortion, and repeated Pain.
When wild Deſpair, impatient of its Woes,
By fond Self-murther would ſuborn Repoſe:
A Life deſtroy'd unmov'd the Keeper ſees,
And only mourns his Loſs of Bribes and Fees.

Here, tho' his barb'rous Rigours find an End,
Farther will pow'rful Avarice extend;
Like the Grand *Turk*, he pleaſes to declare
Himſelf, of all that die, the gen'ral Heir.
What ev'ry Vaſſal leaves, he ſpeaks his own,
But yields no Portion to the Wife or Son.
No Plaints can reach the Courts, or timely Art
Prevents their ſinking to the Hearer's Heart.
Had not a *P---e* in ſpotleſs Glory ſhin'd,
Our Juſtice had been deaf as well as blind.
No Laws, no Privilege Redreſs could give,
Nor Subjects' Right, nor King's Prerogative;
Not Acts of Grace, till Heaven's appointed Hour
To dart juſt Vengeance on tyrannick Pow'r:
Not God's Vicegerents broke the Iron Chain,
Ev'n *Anne* her ſelf was merciful in vain:
Not ſov'reign Smiles the Priſon Gates unfold,
Without large Tributes of extorted Gold.

So

So Purgatory's Realm the Pope obeys,
The Founder he, and Warden of the Place.
There Souls are feign'd fierce Flames to undergo,
Intenſe, as everlaſting Burnings glow;
Tho' *Chriſt* had clear'd their Guilt, they long remain
Pardon'd and Pris'ners to infernal Pain,
No charitable Pontiff turns the Keys,
'Till prieſtly Goalers have ſecur'd their Fees.
Is ours the Land where Peace and Freedom ſmile!
What wrathful Influence curſt our Age and Iſle!
Monſters of boundleſs Avarice to ſee,
Unbluſhing Fraud, unſated Cruelty!
Here *B---ge* breaths as yet the vital Air!
Here partial Great ones conſcious *H---s* ſpare!

Yet *Britain* ceaſe thy Captives' Woes to mourn,
To break their Chains, ſee *O*---- was born!
V----, whoſe ſteady Truth no Threats can bend!
And *H*----, the Sailor's never-failing Friend!
T-----, whoſe rich Youth can Eaſe and Pleaſure fly!
And *P*----, renown'd for Piety!
C----, to aid the Friendleſs never ſlow,
Whoſe gen'rous Breaſt ſtill melts at Humane Woe!
Theſe dare the Tyrants long ſecure oppoſe,
Thus gracious Heav'n its Benefits beſtows,
The Antidote is found there where the Poiſon grows.

Theſe, and the reſt for ardent Goodneſs fam'd,
Unnam'd, tho' greatly worthy to be nam'd;

Who

Who ſeek to merit Praiſe, but not receive,
May thoſe I name as eaſily forgive!
Who fear not to relieve th'afflicted, riſe
Girt with falſe Friends and real Enemies.
Numbers at firſt with Scorn their Fervour view,
And ſmile in ſecret at the active few.
Faint-hearted or deſigning Murmurs ſound,
And whiſper *'Tis impoſſible* around.
And Craft, by publick Clamours overborn,
When Tides of Juſtice grew too ſtrong to turn,
Boaſted its Aim by ſpecious vain Pretence
T'elude their Strength, and mock their Diligence.
Short Boaſt! all Dangers to their Courage bow,
And where appears the vaunted Cunning now?
So was *Alcides* ſent to dang'rous War,
(If falſe with real Labours we compare.)

The

The dreaded Youth that Monſters might devour,
Thus ſly *Euryſtheus* us'd his fatal Pow'r;
But ſaw with Conqueſt crown'd the gallant Boy,
And rais'd the Fame he purpos'd to deſtroy.

The glorious Few, by bounteous Heav'n ordain'd
To looſe the Fetters of a Nation chain'd,
Urge their appointed Toil with utmoſt Speed,
Almoſt proportion'd to the Wretches' Need.
No By-deſign retards the deſtin'd Race,
They plead no ſtated Bus'neſs of a Place;
No Thoughts of meaner Ends their Souls detain,
Of ſoothing Pleaſure, or of ſordid Gain.
Soon as the *Fleet* receives each welcom Gueſt,
Joy long-forgotten cheers the fainteſt Breaſt;
Pain at their Preſence ſtops the riſing Sigh,
And languid Famine opes her hollow Eye;

Horror

Horror flies thence, They once appearing there,
And the worſt Torment of the Goal, Deſpair.
So at th'Almighty's Nod with rapid Wings
Forth from the Throne a Guardian Angel ſprings,
Through Space immenſe, quick as the Morning Ray,
To ſuccour Earth diſtreſs'd he ſhoots away.
Bids *Peter* riſe from Bonds and Keepers free,
And looks the Pris'ner into Liberty.

Fear'd, honour'd, lov'd long may the Patriots ſtand,
Support and Honour of their native Land!
Warm without Rage, without Vain-glory brave,
Firm to protect, and obſtinate to ſave!
Whom no falſe Scents deceive, no Searches tire.
Reſiſtleſs to revenge, as to enquire!

He

He who for injur'd Right dare ſtrongly plead
The Pris'ners Council, earneſt tho' unfee'd.
To guard the Weak, who ſcorns the Mighty's
Frown,
Deſpiſing no Man's Danger but his own.
In Camps his Courage as in Senates try'd,
Daunts with ſevere Rebuff the Sons of Pride.
O that his Soul with healthier Limbs were
join'd,
A Body leſs unequal to his Mind.
He, who to *H*-----*s*' Crimes eternal Foe,
When wav'ring Numbers would Connivance
ſhow,
Shall ill-got Wealth ſecure the Robber? cry'd,
And ſingly ſtedfaſt turn'd the rapid Tide.
Till Impudence itſelf aſham'd gave way,
And Brib'ry yielded, bluſhing to gainſay.

The Man, who wiſely ſtudious not to loſe
His Heav'n the only Int'reſt he purſues,
Points to his Offspring the Celeſtial way;
Who hundreds feaſted on that happy Day,
Which ſaw from conquer'd Death the Saviour riſe;
Alms giv'n for *Chriſt*, accepted Sacrifice!
The Man who toil'd the vicious Poor t'amend,
Foe to Intemp'rance, as to Need a Friend;
To puniſh ſtarving Sots our Nation's Shame,
And ſnatch the Firebrands from the liquid Flame.
To ſave them from the Snare of low Eſtate,
And raiſe their Minds, but not intoxicate.
The Youth, whoſe dextrous and impartial Skill,
As diligent in Good as Knaves in Ill,
Unfolds the knotty Mazes of the Laws,
And ſtrictly faithful to the righteous Cauſe,

Baffles each Quirk, each Subterfuge of Wrong,
Of Lawyers' double Heart and double Tongue.
And He, who cautious leſt deſign'd Delay
For Guilt's Eſcape ſhould yield an eaſy Way,
Obtain'd *Auguſta*'s Civil Pow'rs Decree,
That Law for once might ſide with Equity:
Full Space for juſt accuſing might allow,
Nor Teacher *H*-----*s* leave his Scholar now.
And others tho' unmention'd not unknown,
Who juſtly glory in their Conduct ſhown:
Who ſtand each Shock, each Stratagem defeat,
Superior to the Bribe and to the Threat.
And *H*---*s* half his Thouſands well might ſpare,
Could half his Thouſands make a Coward there!

Yet nobleſt Acts as Fury ſome eſteem,
For what ſo good but Satan can blaſpheme?
'Tis Fury all, to dry the Captive's Tears,
To heal his Sickneſs, and prevent his Fears!

Fury!

Fury, for Orphans Diligence t'employ,
And make the mournful Widow weep for Joy!
Fury, the Wrongs paſt Suff'rance to redreſs,
While Crowds tranſported their Deliv'rers bleſs!
Fury, the Poor and Friendleſs to regard,
Without mean Proſpect of a baſe Reward!
Life, Freedom, Health and Gladneſs to beſtow,
The only Fury Stateſmen never know!

When Villains firſt beheld the Tempeſt lour,
They ſneer'd and truſted to the Screen of Pow'r;
Numbers t'avoid the dire Example bent,
Leſt righteous Vengeance grow to Precedent:
And Gifts which fierceſt Anger oft' appeaſe
And ſecret Friends and ſecret Services:
No Pangs of Conſcience ſtruck the harden'd Mind,
To God's right Hand and heav'nly Juſtice blind.

But when their boaſted Engines nought avail'd,
And Gold itſelf oppos'd by Virtue fail'd;
Suddain, alaſs! their groundleſs Quiet flies,
Unuſual Doubts and fatal Bodings riſe:
Leſt Wrath divine might flagrant Guilt purſue,
And who ſuborn falſe Witneſs die by true!
Conſcious of ill-us'd Pow'r and publick Hate
Then other Tyrants fear'd approaching Fate.
An univerſal Groan the Priſons gave,
And *Newgate* trembled thro' her inmoſt Cave;
Leſt farther Searches farther Crimes reveal,
Which Arts infernal labour to conceal:
Leſt Pity's Eye thoſe Regions ſhould explore,
Where Beams of Mercy never reach'd before;
Unwelcom Light on darkeſt Dungeons throw,
And ev'ry latent Depth of Horror ſhow.
So, as inventive *Homer*'s Fiction taught,
Earth-ſhaking *Neptune* for the *Grecians* fought!

The

The ſolid Ground quak'd to the Centre down,
The King of Shades leap'd frighted from his Throne:
Leſt Earth ſhould cleave, and Hell appear in Light,
Diſplay'd to mortal and immortal Sight.
Drear dreadful Realms, rul'd by a Tyrant Lord,
By Man deteſted, and by Heav'n abhorr'd!

Here real Pow'r Divine its Pleaſure ſhows,
And God's right Hand what Mortal can oppoſe!
Or aw'd by Mercy iſſuing from the Throne,
Or born by popular Compaſſion down,
The wordy Fool renown'd for Flouriſh long
Suſpends th'unmeaning Torrent of his Tongue.
The Friend to Knav'ry plays a publick Part,
His Head o'er-bearing his corrupted Heart,

Compell'd

Compell'd his darling Int'reſt to diſcard,
And ſpeed the Motion he wou'd fain retard.
The ſelf-admiring Politician joins,
Spight of his open Mocks and ſecret Mines,
Forc'd, tho' reluctant, to diſſemble Good,
And ſhare the Action he in vain withſtood.
So when from Heav'n increas'd by ſudden Show'rs,
The Stream ſwift-rowling down the Mountain pours;
A Tree's declining Trunk, which Years divide
Half from its rooted Strength, obſtructs the Tide,
The rapid Courſe unable long to bar,
Or ſtem the Violence of the wat'ry War,
It yields, by Mother Earth ſuſtain'd no more,
And ſwells the Torrent which it ſtopp'd before.

Proceed, diſintereſted Few, proceed;
Heal ev'ry Wound, and ſuccour ev'ry Need.

Let

Let all *Britannia*'s Mis'ry be redreſs'd,
Cite ev'ry Tyrant to the righteous Teſt;
The Teſt which Innocence can never fear,
Candid tho' ſtrict, impartial tho' ſevere.
No artful Gueſſes there to Proofs advance,
Help'd by dark dubious diſtant Circumſtance.
Nor Bribes, nor Threats, nor hinting Prompters there,
Inform the wav'ring Witneſs how to ſwear.
Go on! let none your ardent Zeal withſtand,
And ſhow'r diffuſive Mercies o'er the Land.
That Heav'n by you may bleſs our happy Iſle,
And e'en the Tradeſman and the Merchant ſmile!
While Crowds unchain'd your Fame with Shouts declare,
Reſtor'd to vital Light, and vital Air.

So ſuddain this Deliv'rance which they meet,
Their Grief ſo hopeleſs, and their Joy ſo great;
Scarce to the Change they yet can Credit give,
Scarce are they yet perſuaded that they live.
So when th'Archangel gives the fated Sign,
(If Humane Joys we liken to Divine)
The Summons univerſal Nature hears,
Nor pleads Preſcription of ſix thouſand Years;
Not everlaſting Hills their Dead retain,
Not deep Abyſſes of th'unfathom'd Main;
The ſleeping Saints look up with joyful Eyes,
And quick'ning at the ſacred Trump, ariſe.
Their Pains all paſs'd, their Tranſport to ſucceed,
Immortal Lives in endleſs Bloom they lead,
From Death's tyrannick Chain, and Earth's dark Priſon free'd.

BRITISH 15 DE 96 MUSEUM

FINIS.